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AUTHOR Livieratos, Barbara B.
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ABSTRACT

In 1989, under the auspices of the State Board for Community Colleges, a survey was conducted of continuing education (CE) students enrolled during fiscal year (FY) 1987 at community colleges throughout Maryland. At Howard Community College (HCC), a sample of the 8,047 students enrolled in state-funded CE courses was surveyed regarding the types of courses in which they were registered, their goals, and their personal characteristics. A total of 533 students responded to the survey, reflecting an adjusted response rate of 46% and representing 6% of the individuals who actually took CE courses in FY87. Study findings included the following: (1) the largest single category of courses taken by respondents were vocational/technical (42%), followed by health care (13%), other (12%), general education (11%), and consumer education (8%); (2) 42% of the respondents had career-related goals, 30% planned to update their skills, and 10% were preparing for a new career; (3) the majority of the respondents said that their goal for taking a course had been achieved, and 80% of the respondents gave high ratings to the quality of instruction; (4) at HCC, minority students represented 13% of the CE students, a higher proportion than at other mid-sized community colleges (peer colleges) at community colleges statewide (10%); (5) HCC's CE respondents were considerably younger than those in the rest of the state, even though the respondents were actually older than the average HCC CE enrollee; and (6) 46% of HCC survey respondents were college graduates, compared with 18% at peer colleges and 29% in the rest of the state. (JMC)

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SURVEY SHEDS LIGHT ON CONTINUING EDUCATION ENROLLEES

By Barbara B. Livieratos

Marketing Research Analyst

Howard Community College

Office of Research and Personnel

Research Report Number 59, May 1989

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HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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SURVEY SHEDS LIGHT ON CONTINUING EDUCATION ENROLLEES

Barbara B. Livieratos
Marketing Research Analyst

SURVEY DESIGN

Under the auspices of the State Board for Community Colleges (SBCC), a survey was recently completed of Continuing Education students enrolled during Fiscal Year 1987 at community colleges throughout Maryland. A random sample of enrollees was drawn for each college. At Howard Community College there were 13,369 enrollments in Continuing Education courses in FY87, representing 9,542 individuals. Of this group, 8,047 were enrolled in state funded courses, and it was from this group that the sampling was done. The 533 respondents to the survey reflect an adjusted response rate of 46% among those in the sample. It should be noted, however, that the respondents make up only 6% of the individuals who actually took Continuing Education courses in FY87. While this fact imposes some limitations on the interpretation of the findings, this first-ever survey of Continuing Education enrollees provides some informative and useful data.

This report presents the survey results for HCC respondents. It also offers a comparative look at results from peer colleges and from the state as a whole.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Survey respondents differed somewhat from the overall population of Continuing Education students. A limited set of data is routinely collected on all Continuing Education students, so it is impossible to know the extent to which the survey respondents differ from all students.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS	
Female	64%
Non-minority	86%
Minority	14%
College graduate	44%
Employed full-time	54%
Mean age: 43 years	

As shown above, the majority of the respondents to the Continuing Education survey were female. The percentage of minority students was very close to the proportion of minorities in the county. The proportion of respondents who were college graduates was surprisingly high (44%). More than half of the respondents were employed full-time. While the mean age of respondents was 43, data for all FY87 Con Ed students show a mean age of 38. (Table One gives more detail on the demographic characteristics of survey respondents.)

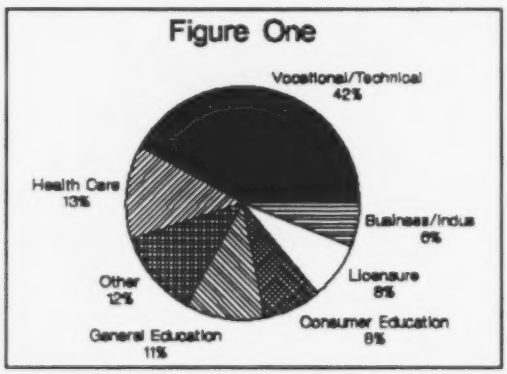
COURSE INFORMATION

Judging by the types of courses for which they were registered, the majority of Continuing Education enrollees took work-related courses.

WORK-RELATED COURSES WERE THE MOST POPULAR WITH SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The largest single category of courses (42%) could be classified as vocational/ technical, while other work-related courses involved business/industry content, or were for licensure or apprenticeship requirements.

Figure One



Most of the enrollees who responded to the survey attended all sessions of their courses. Among those in courses with specific requirements for completion, 90% satisfactorily completed their courses. (Table Two presents additional information on the courses in which respondents were enrolled.)

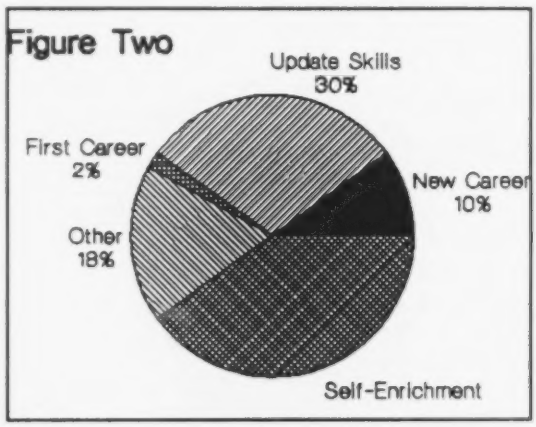
GOALS

Respondents to the survey had diverse goals for enrolling in their courses.

42% OF RESPONDENTS HAD GOALS RELATED TO CAREERS

A combined 42% had goals directly related to their careers or jobs - 30% of these wanted to update their skills, 10% planned to enter a different career, and 2% were entering their first careers. Enrollees' primary goals are shown below.

Figure Two



Goals differed somewhat by the educational level of respondents. More of those at either end of the educational spectrum (with less than a high school education or with a bachelor's degree or higher) were likely to say that self-enrichment was their primary goal. Those with a high school diploma, some college, or a community college degree tended to have career-related goals.

The majority of respondents said that their goal for taking the course had been achieved. Four-fifths of the respondents gave high ratings to the quality of instruction, and an even higher proportion said that they would recommend the course to others who had the same goal.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN MARYLAND

Data on the statewide survey of community college Continuing Education enrollees was provided by the State Board for Community Colleges so that comparisons could be made between individual colleges, peer colleges, and the state as a whole. HCC's "peer" group was considered to be other medium-sized community colleges (Allegany, Charles, Dundalk, Frederick, Hagerstown, and Harford).

There may be slight differences in the percentages reported for HCC alone and in the comparative data, because SBCC used weighting factors in their data analysis (see technical note on Table Three).

There were several characteristics which distinguished HCC from its peers and from the other colleges in the state. HCC had a higher proportion of minority Continuing Education students than did its peer colleges (13% versus 6%), and minorities at HCC were above the statewide total of 10%. The figures for HCC correspond to data for Howard County, which showed a 9% minority population in 1980 and project 15% in the 1990's.

It is interesting to note that Asians made up 3% of HCC's enrollees who responded, while for peers and the state as a whole they were 1%.

DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS

	HCC	PEERS	STATE
Female	63%	60%	65%
Non-Minority*	86%	91%	74%
Minority*	14%	7%	15%
Age Over 50	36%	48%	43%
College Grad	46%	18%	29%

*These figures may not add to 100% because of "unknown" race.

HCC's Con Ed respondents were considerably younger than its peer colleges. Thirty-six percent of HCC's respondents were age 50 or older. The corresponding figure for peer colleges was 48%, and it was 54% for the rest of the state. HCC's mean age of respondents was 43, compared to 50 for the state as a whole.

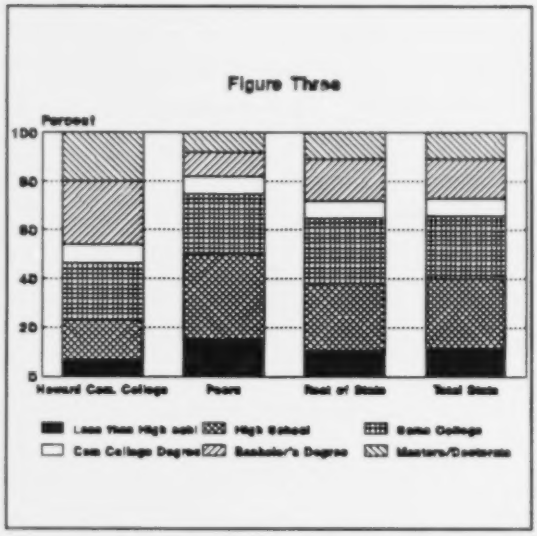
HCC'S RESPONDENTS WERE YOUNGER THAN THOSE IN THE REST OF THE STATE

It should be noted that HCC's survey respondents, while considerably younger than respondents in the rest of the state, were actually older than the average HCC Con Ed enrollee. HCC's survey respondents' mean age was 43, while for all HCC Con Ed enrollees it was 38. Data on most of the other colleges in the state reflect this same propensity for respondents to be older than the enrollees as a whole.

As noted above, HCC's respondents were a well-educated group, with 46% of them being college graduates.

HCC'S SURVEY RESPONDENTS WERE A HIGHLY EDUCATED GROUP - 46% WERE COLLEGE GRADUATES.

The 46% figure coincides exactly with what was found in a 1985 marketing research study for county residents with previous degrees. Peer colleges had 18% college graduates, and the rest of the state had 29% who had finished college.



HCC had a higher proportion of respondents who were employed full-time - 52% versus 40% for peer colleges and 42% for the rest of the state. HCC also had a higher proportion working part-time -12% compared to 9% for peer colleges and 7% for the rest of the state. The total number of HCC respondents employed is 67% (including full- and part-time workers and the 3% employed but seeking a new job).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the characteristics discussed above, it can be seen that on the whole, HCC's respondents were younger and better educated and more were employed full-time than peer colleges and the rest of the state's community colleges. Respondents were inclined to take work-related courses and to have career goals in mind when enrolling.

While the survey respondents proved to be a relatively small sample of all those who took Con Ed courses, insofar as they represent all Con Ed enrollees, there are some specific marketing and programmatic implications to the survey findings. HCC's Continuing Education Department has been quite successful in designing a program mix that appeals to young professionals, and judging from this survey, continued efforts in that direction are warranted. At the same time, 20% of the respondents were retirees, and 24% were over 60, so programming directed to that end of the age spectrum should certainly be another focal area.

These survey results have brought into sharper focus the picture of the FY87 Continuing Education enrollee. It must be remembered, however, that these results cannot be generalized to other cohorts of Continuing Education enrollees. The survey findings can nonetheless provide valuable input for planning, developing, and marketing Continuing Education programs.

TABLE ONE.
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS TO THE CONTINUING ED SURVEY

SURVEY ITEM	SURVEY RESPONDENTS (N-533) N	%
GENDER:		
Female	340	64%
Male	193	36%
RACE:		
White	458	86%
Black	54	10%
Asian	14	3%
Other/Unknown	3	1%
AGE:		
19 or under	19	4%
20 - 24	33	6%
25 - 29	63	12%
30 - 39	124	23%
40 - 49	130	24%
50 - 59	62	12%
60 - 69	70	13%
70 and over	32	6%
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:		
Less than high school	32	6%
High school	85	17%
Some college	124	24%
CC degree	45	9%
Bachelor's degree	135	26%
Masters	77	15%
Doctorate	15	3%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS:[1]		
Employed full-time	290	54%
Employed part-time	67	13%
Unemployed, seeking work	23	4%
Unemployed, not seeking	26	5%
Employed, seeking new job	16	3%
Retired	78	15%
Other	34	6%
RESIDENCE:		
Anne Arundel	16	3%
Baltimore County	37	7%
Carroll County	14	3%
Howard County	434	81%
Montgomery County	4	1%
Prince Georges County	13	2%
Baltimore City	7	1%
Other	8	2%

1. Percentages may add up to more than 100% because some respondents checked more than one employment category.

TABLE TWO.
COURSE INFORMATION ON CONTINUTING EDUCATION SURVEY RESPONDENTS

SURVEY ITEM	SURVEY RESPONDENTS (N=533) N	%
TYPE OF COURSE:		
Vocational/Technical	225	42%
Remedial	23	4%
Community Development	10	2%
Consumer Education	43	8%
Health Care	69	13%
General Interest	9	2%
Licensure	43	8%
General Education	58	11%
Apprenticeship	22	4%
Business/Industry	31	6%
ATTENDANCE:		
Did not attend	13	2%
Attended one session	13	2%
Attended some/most	144	27%
Attended all	361	68%
SATISFACTORILY COMPLETED COURSE REQUIREMENTS:		
Yes (90% of those applicable)	288	56%
No (10% of those applicalbe)	33	6%
Not applicable	194	38%
COURSE TAKEN TO FULFILL LICENSURE OR CERTIFICATION:		
Yes	109	21%
No	408	79%
CEUs EARNED FOR COURSE:		
Yes	76	15%
No	160	32%
No CEUs applicable	263	53%

TABLE THREE.
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS TO THE CONTINUING EDUCATION SURVEY COMPARING HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE WITH PEER COLLEGES AND THE STATE

SURVEY ITEM	HOWARD COM.COL. %	PEER[1] COLLEGES %	REST OF STATE %	TOTAL[2] %
GENDER:				
Female	63%	60%	65%	64%
Male	37	40	35	36
RACE:				
White	86%	91%	74%	79%
Black	10	5	10	9
Asian	3	1	*	1
Other/Unknown	1	3	16	12
AGE:				
19 or under	3%	4%	3	3%
20 - 24	5	7	6	6
25 - 29	11	8	8	8
30 - 39	22	18	17	18
40 - 49	22	15	13	14
50 - 59	12	10	9	10
60 - 69	16	19	22	21
70 and over	8	19	12	20
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:				
Less than high school	7%	15%	11%	12%
High school	16	35	27	28
Some college	23	25	27	26
CC degree	8	7	7	7
Bachelor's degree	26	10	17	16
Masters	17	7	10	10
Doctorate	3	1	1	1
EMPLOYMENT STATUS[3]:				
Employed full-time	52%	40%	42%	43%
Employed part-time	12	9	7	8
Unemployed,seeking work	4	8	4	5
Unemployed,not seeking	5	5	4	4
Employed,seeking job	3	2	2	2
Retired	20	33	36	34
Other	7	7	8	8

[1] HCC's peer colleges are: Allegany, Charles, Dundalk, Frederick, Hagerstown, and Harford.

[2] The State Board for Community Colleges (SBCC) gave differential weights to respondents in specified courses so that the sample would be reflective of the population of all Con Ed students. The weighted total for HCG is 745, for peer colleges it is 2441, for the rest of the state it is 7497, and the total weighted number for the state is 10,683.

[3] Total figures may add up to more than 100% because some respondents checked more than one employment category.

REPORT ON CONTINUING EDUCATION SURVEY RESULTS

CREDITS

PROJECT DIRECTOR: Susan K. Radcliffe

SURVEY DESIGN: Maryland Community College Research Group (MCCRG)
Maryland State Board for Community Colleges (SBCC)

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORT AUTHOR: Barbara B. Livieratos

DESK TOP PUBLISHING ASSISTANCE: Melissa Mattey

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